

TOWN OF ARLINGTON
TOWN MEETING ELECTRONIC VOTING STUDY COMMITTEE

March 6, 2013

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Town Meeting Electronic Voting Study Committee was called to order by Committee Chair Eric Helmuth in the Second Floor Meeting Room of the Town Hall Annex on Wednesday, March 6, 2013, at 7:35 PM.

Quorum

A quorum was present: Raymond Charbonneau III, Steve Storch, Wes Beal, Adam Auster, and Eric Helmuth.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION:
*Approval of
Minutes*

Mr. Charbonneau moved that the minutes of the February 20, 2013, meeting be approved.

The motion passed.

Reports

Chair

Committee Chair Eric Helmuth said that John Leone, who was to draft the bylaws proposal the Committee would bring before Town Meeting, is unable to attend tonight's meeting because of an unexpected conflict

He said that the Finance Committee has recommended to appropriate \$10,000 to fund the lease of an electronic-voting system in FY 2014 for however many nights that sum will allow.

That amount will be included as a line item in the Town Manager's budget, he said, unless Town Meeting rejects the bylaw amendment to permit electronic voting.

The Capital Planning Committee will consider purchase or long-term lease of a system for a future year, he said.

New Business

DISCUSSION: *Committee* *Recommendations*

The Committee identified the following three questions that Town Meeting would likely expect the Committee answer in its report: (1) whether to permit electronic voting and if so (2) how and (3) whether to do so with a system that is leased or purchased.

DISCUSSION: *Bylaw*

The Committee discussed what information to share with the Selectmen at their March 11 hearing on the bylaw proposal, since the final proposal will not be ready by then.

In the absence of a specific proposal, Mr. Auster recapitulated the informal conclusions reached at the previous meeting.

He said that while no motion had been made, the Committee members present at that meeting favored a simpler and less-prescriptive bylaw over a detailed one, and a bylaw that would permit electronic voting to be used for any vote, including as an alternative to voice voting.

He said the discussion favored a rule requiring that roll-call data from all electronic votes be made public, even for votes that are not formal roll calls.

He said that the Committee members had favored preparing two alternative proposals to Town Meeting on the issue of whether electronic roll calls should require a new vote or whether they should be accomplished by revealing the roll-call data of the previous electronic tally.

Mr. Helmuth led the committee in a discussion to formulate a motion that would express these conclusions.

Mr. Charbonneau said that the Committee should make a single recommendation on the question of revoting versus revealing data in the case of electronic roll-call votes, and should not present alternative proposals to Town Meeting.

For this reason, he said, he opposed the motion.

MOTION:

*Scope of
Bylaw*

Mr. Auster made the following motion:

The Electronic Voting Study Committee supports and intends to recommend bylaw amendment language to provide for electronic voting in town meeting that:

1. Permits but does not require the use of electronic voting equipment for any Town Meeting vote,
2. Requires all individual votes collected by an electronic voting system to be made available to the general public;

We further intend to ask town meeting to choose between the following two options for bylaw language specifying how to conduct an official roll call vote when the electronic voting system contains data on the individual votes of town meeting members for that vote:

- Conduct a second electronic vote; or
- Utilize the data from the previous vote.

The motion passed.

DISCUSSION:

*Fraudulent
Voting*

Mr. Auster asked the committee to consider the problem of fraudulent proxy voting.

He said that electronic voting would eliminate some opportunities for error and fraud in the voting process.

However, he said, it would introduce a potential new source of fraud in the form of illegal proxy voting, were Town Meeting members to give their voting handsets to other individuals.

Mr. Auster said that while such practice might be unlikely, it could be undetectable. He noted that the handsets could operate from outside the meeting hall.

One remedy, he said, would be to provide in the bylaws that close electronic votes, defined as perhaps a margin of less than 6 votes, would be invalid. This

would oblige the Moderator to use traditional methods, he said.

Committee members noted that proxy voting is illegal.

The Committee discussed various procedures to discourage proxy voting by requiring each Town Meeting member to check his or her handset in and out, which would impose a burden on the members.

Mr. Beal suggested that the bylaw could provide that in close votes the roll-call data would be displayed immediately, to allow the members to check for error and fraud.

He and other committee members said that would be sufficient to deter and detect voting fraud, if any.

Mr. Auster volunteered to draft a provision to that effect for the Committee to consider at its next meeting.

MOTION:

Adjournment

Mr. Beal moved that the meeting adjourn.

The motion passed.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Adam Auster, *Secretary*

APPROVED

March 20, 2013

Adam Auster, *Secretary*